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RECENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SYRIA

AWAD BARAKAT *

Introduction

433 1. Despite the great potentialities that lie in her fertile soil, the nature of her climate, the energy of her people and her geographical position, Syria is an economically underdeveloped country. Perhaps it would be more accurate to use the term *not fully developed* to describe Syria's present situation, particularly in view of the economic awakening which began after World War II and has continued to grow up to the present day.

000 2. Admitted that the economic development of any country cannot be undertaken without individual as well as governmental effort, we nevertheless intend to restrict our examination of the economic development of Syria to the part played by the government. The reasons for this restriction are: limitations of space do not allow a full analytical treatment of both individual and governmental efforts; statistics on governmental activities are far fuller and more reliable than any as yet available for private concerns; finally we believe that in a country like Syria, where private capital is inadequate and the investment habit not yet deeply rooted, economic development must depend to a very large extent upon the government. Indeed we would go so far as to say that unless the government is able to assume control of economic development and is willing to bear the greater part of the burden, little improvement can take place. Part of the government's job will be to create the conditions, lacking until now which will encourage individual efforts and investment.

3. Underdeveloped countries, generally speaking, have certain conditions in common, the most characteristic being the following: partial exploitation of natural resources and neglect of possibilities of growth: low national production and national income, resulting in weak purchasing power, low national savings and shortage of investment capital; a deficit in the balance of trade

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7:Lewis S-5 (ca. 1940-45) 1948 MD1 Syria MD1

MALARIA, IRRIGATION, AND SOIL EROSION IN CENTRAL SYRIA

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THIS study of the Selemiya region of central Syria had its origin in a modest wartime public-health program. Hundreds of patients suffering from malaria in the villages of this district were regularly treated by a mobile clinic, and it soon became obvious that this work had to be supplemented if not replaced by swamp drainage and other measures of malaria control. The necessary investigations showed that soil erosion in the hills in the east of the region was partly responsible for the swamps on the plain. The swamps themselves were frequently associated with ancient irrigation works. Thus various problems of the region—agricultural, social, and medical—were closely linked in origin and development. It was found that attempts to solve any one of them alone could not be more than partially successful, and the conclusion reached was that the ideal solution would have to be radical, comprehensive, and on a large-scale regional basis.

The Landscape

The greater part of the governmental subdistrict (caza) of Selemiya is a plain. Bounding it sharply on the west are low plateaus, capped by a level bed of basalt a few feet thick; to the southeast are ranges of hills, part of the Palmyrene group, to which the local collective name of Jebel Bil'as may be given.

The ground slope over much of the region is toward the town of Selemiya; drainage from an area of 620 square miles converges on the low flat land around the town. Because of the continuous subsurface flow, a perennial stream rises at Ain ez Zerqa, to flow 12 miles to the west to join the Orontes. All other perennial streams, however, are only a few hundred or thousand yards long and are used for irrigation; most of them rise in artificial underground channels. Most of the watercourses are wadis, dry or nearly dry for much of the year. In the hills these are steep, V-shaped valleys, on the plain generally wide, shallow, gravel-filled channels in gentle, open valleys.

Figure 2 gives a simplified indication of the configuration. Hydrologically, the strata may be simply grouped into the Cretaceous limestones

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14:International Bank S-5 (1954)1955 MD1 Syria MD1

PREFACE

121 This is the report of a mission to Syria, organized by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development at the request of the Government of Syria. The task of the mission was to undertake a general review of Syria's economic potentialities and to submit recommendations designed to assist the government to formulate a long-term development program for increasing Syria's productive resources and raising the standard of living of its people. The recommendations were to concern the approximate rate of public capital expenditure which Syria can appropriately undertake, priorities for such expenditure as among different sectors of the economy and as among types of undertakings within those sectors, measures apart from capital investment for improving and increasing production and raising living standards, and economic, fiscal and administrative policies and measures necessary for the success of the development program.

114 The mission consisted of ten full-time members. The adviser on agricultural production was nominated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; one of the economists is a member of the regular staff of the International Monetary Fund. Five members (the advisers on industry, housing and community planning, water resources and power, and transportation, and the agricultural economist) were recruited by the Bank from outside its staff. The other three members are members of the Bank's regular staff. The mission chief and one of the experts are from the Netherlands; the other mission members are from Switzerland, France, Greece, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The mission arrived in Syria early in February 1954 and remained until the latter part of April. During their stay in Syria, members of the mission travelled through all of the country's nine provinces. The mission reassembled at the Bank's headquarters for the purpose of writing this report.

121 The report is in two parts. Part I, the Main Report, contains the mission's recommendations for the organization and financing of a program of government action extending over five full years. Part II contains a series

[p. vi CONTAINS NO TEXTUAL MATERIAL.]

121 in this field by the Directorate of Antiquities. We have also studied the special conditions in each of the country's great archaeological regions, the particular difficulties to which the preservation and restoration of their monuments give rise, and practical ways of applying the principles already formulated.

114 The mission, consisting of an archaeologist, Mr. Paul Collart, a professor at the universities of Geneva and Lausanne, as head of the mission, an architect, Mr. Armando Dillon, Superintendent of Historical Monuments in Palermo, and Dr. Selim Abdul-Hak, Director-General of Syrian Antiquities, spent 10 weeks, from the end of May to the beginning of August 1953, collecting the necessary information on the spot. Thanks to the facilities accorded to them, Mr. P. Collart and Mr. A. Dillon were able to travel extensively in the country and thus form a well-grounded opinion on the various questions which they had to study.

000 It is our pleasant duty here to express our very sincere gratitude to all those who helped us in our task: at Damascus, to the officials of the Antiquities Service, who gave us assistance and advice on many occasions, and particularly to Mr. Ziki Amir, who accompanied us on our tours of the city; at Aleppo to Mr. Feisal Serafi, Director of Antiquities in northern Syria, and Mr. Soubhi Saouaf, Technical Officer; at Bosra, to Mr. Souleiman Magdad, Superintendent of Antiquities; at Sueida, Palmyra, Raqqa, Qalaat Semlig, Hama and the Krak des Chevaliers, to the inspectors and attendants who so kindly welcomed us and acted as our guides. We should also like to thank Mr. Henri Seyrig, who authorized us to take our illustrations for this report from the collection of aerial photographs at the French Archaeological Institute in Beirut, and Mr. Georges Tchalenko, who gave us much useful information.

Lastly, although he was himself a member of the mission, we should like to express our gratitude to Dr. Selim Abdul-Hak for the kind welcome he gave us and all that he did to make our work easier during our stay in Syria.

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